

# NYE VISITS JAIL

HE DESCRIBES IT AS A LEADING INDUSTRY AND TELLS OF THE INMATES.

An Ambitious Executioner Who Has Fallen Short of His Mark—At the Scene of the Great Dalton Fight, With a Graphic Description of It.

(Copyright, 1894, by Edgar W. Nye.)

IN THE SOUTHWEST

The jail at Fort Smith, Ark., is one of the leading industries here. I visited it, for it is the only concern I know of that has not felt the depression in business this year.

"Is the warden here?" I inquired of a stocky, good natured man who was sitting by the door in the glorious spring weather.

"No, sir. He is away."

"Well, who is in charge now?"

"I am," he said, but did not ask me to come in.

Then I gave him my name and asked him if I could visit the institution.



AT THE JAIL.

"Yes," he said. "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll swap shows with you."

So I gave him a pass for the evening, and we started in to visit the prison, which is a big, rectangular building, standing in the middle of a large, grassy knoll overlooking the city.

Some of the prisoners are Indians, but they are not of the Ramona stripe. They are more of the Cherokee stripe. People who read "Ramona" do not expect to find an Indian in jail unless the court has erred in its judgment. I was pained to hear that some of these red brothers were charged with stealing.

Some of them are even charged with murder. This striving little jail has over 20 murderers in it at this writing, some of them not yet 21 years old.

Start, the outlaw and murderer, is one of them. He looks to be about 20 and is not a bad looking chap excepting that he has remarkably piercing cheek bones and a restless eye. He has killed more people even at 20 than many a successful physician 60 years of age.

His mother and sister came down on the train with us the evening before. The former is a gentle eyed, middle aged, dark woman of quiet demeanor, but evidently did not understand how to successfully bring up a boy. In a few weeks this lad will be called home. It is needless to say that he will go directly to paradise, where all the murderers go if we can rely upon their farewell remarks on the gallows.

I visited the gallows where over 90 men have passed on to their reward. It is an inclosure with an elevated platform at one end, with a roof over it, so that there need be no postponement on account of weather, for they have never disappointed an audience since the construction of the building. The trap has a capacity of eight men, I would think. At the back of the platform is a long bench for the chairman and glee club.

At the front is the long trap hinged on both sides, so that when the trigger is sprung the platform parts in the middle and the speaker drops through it with great vigor.

The long executioner had an ambition to hang 100 men, but when he struck the ninety-ninth it happened to be a warm personal friend, so he resigned, and his ambition is still unfulfilled. He always weighed his man and then got a railroad tie or log of the same weight, cut out a rude head and neck on one end of it and rehearsed with this dummy and the new rope till he was sure that all was correct and ready. Then he did the job in a way that he never felt ashamed of.

"I don't ask you to take my word for it," he would say, with pride. "I just let my work show for itself."

These various wooden dummies stand in a corner by the scaffold, and the whole place has an air of steady, healthful, active business.

The jail now sends its long time convicts to Brooklyn, having filled up most of the other pens in the United States. Overproduction and long hauls seem to be the only danger to the vast volume of business done by this jail.

There were some ladies in the jail. I had never seen any lady convicts before, so went up stairs to see them. A lady fellow who chews navy tobacco is a sad sight. I hope I may never see it again. I hate also to see a lady taking care of a little child that has been recently born to her in cell 49.

I would rather follow her to her grave than see a perfect lady trotting an anonymous baby inside the walls of a penitentiary. We spent the Sabbath in Coffeyville, the scene of the great Dalton fight, which occurred on the 5th day of October, 1892. Colonel Elliott of The Journal kindly piloted us around over the field of battle, and having been on the ground at the time knew every inch of it. He was in 14 pitched battles in

the war, but says this was the most savage and murderous work he ever saw, though it occupied but 12 minutes.

Colonel Elliott in his printed account says that the morning of the 5th dawned bright and beautiful.

Five solitary horsemen might have been seen going toward the town of Coffeyville. One of them used tobacco, but otherwise they were perfect gents. They wore false whiskers, which showed that they did not wish to be recognized. The use of tobacco and false whiskers leads to an ignominious death and should not be encouraged.

These men rode into the town just about as the banks were opening, as Bob Dalton discovered on looking at a beautiful gold repeater, presented to him by a prominent citizen by request. They hitched their horses in an alley marked "the alley of death" in the diagram herewith given. Here there are bullet marks yet to show how hot was the conflict in that neighborhood, and an old stable there has been carried away for relics.

Condon's bank, marked exhibit A, faces the plaza. A plaza is a place where Alliance people hitch their teams and where greasers sell hot tamales made of boiled breast of buzzard inside a corn-shuck. The plaza by day has a fringe of demoralized teams around it, each team consisting of one horse and one mule. It is safe to say that in the southwest fully two-thirds of the teams are thus arranged. Why it is I do not know unless it started that way by accident, and when the set was broken it made it impossible to set it right again.

Three of the robbers entered Condon's bank to overdraw their account. Mr. Carpenter turned from his ledger to wait on these men, whose footsteps he heard, when he found a powerful indorsement in the way of three winchesters, along with a slight draft for the amount on hand.

Gratton Dalton made a profane remark to Mr. Carpenter regarding the state of the country and the slack condition of trade. This convinced Mr. Carpenter and Mr. Ball, the cashier, that the men were not all they should be. These bank officers said very little, but held their hands higher than usual, Mr. Ball slipping one of his sleeves under the arm.

Mr. Dalton then took from his person a two bushel grain sack and asked the bank to put its money in there. He said he would see that no one disturbed them at all.

I forgot to say that Mr. Dalton had no account whatever at Condon's bank and as a matter of fact had no claim on the bank.

They got all there was in sight—some \$4,000—and they demanded what was in the vault, but Dalton was told that the time would not open till 9:30. It was really 20 minutes of 10 at that time, but Dalton was afraid to look at his watch, as he had to keep his gun pointed that way or something might have happened to him, for the bank was not at that time friendly with the Daltons.

Dalton said he could wait till the time lock opened, but soon he got in a hurry and made a coarse and profane remark.

Meantime two customers came into the bank and concluded to remain there. By this time the citizens had discovered the character of the men and began to shoot into the bank from the hardware store marked C. The firing brought more armed men, and soon the robbers were besieged in the bank and had to retreat to the back room, where they held a directors' meeting to discuss whether they should close the bank or resume business. They had left their bag in the front room and did not dare go back after it, the firing was so hot, so they got one of their prisoners to go out on his hands and knees to bring it back to where they were.

Meantime the other two robbers had been more successful at the First National bank, and had secured \$30,000. This bank is marked B on the diagram.

Finally the unhappy robbers in Condon's bank got out and exchanged shots with the citizens, who were giving it to them red hot. Coffeyville men, especially Mr. Isham, the hardware man, and Mr. Kloeber, a livery stable man, are dead shots. One of the robbers was wounded in the arm so that he could not use his gun before he got out of the bank, and by the time the fire got to the alley, where they met within 50 yards of their horses, Mr. Isham was making the entire length of the alley,

about one size larger than a common cooking stove. Here, while looking up toward the windows of surrounding buildings, from which he seemed to think the bullets were coming, a shot or two from Isham's store knocked him over, and he crawled away to a pile of curbstones. He rose, however, and made a last effort to shoot Kloeber, but missed and Kloeber returned the fire, striking Bob in the breast, and he fell without a groan. Grat Dalton, after shooting the city marshal, tried to get away, but Mr. Kloeber gave him his death shot, the ball entering the center of the throat and breaking the neck.

The result of this 12 short minutes of fighting was the utter destruction of four out of the five, Emmett Dalton being now in the penitentiary for life and pretty well shot to pieces besides. He might have escaped with all the money if he had chosen, but returning to get his brother on his horse's back he was shot as he stooped over, and to escape was then impossible.

Dead men and dollar bills were scattered over the alley, and several of the horses had been killed also. It was one of the best things for the country that ever happened, though it cost the lives of four good citizens.

A bullet which struck the window frame of Isham's store just missed a 50 pound can of dynamite inside the window.

The First National bank had \$1.98 after the robbers had gone, but it is still doing a good business, and those who go there to overdraw their accounts on the Dalton plan will be rudely ejected from the bank.

Wherever one goes in Coffeyville he finds a winchester behind the door or under the counter, and it is loaded too. I sat down in a car seat when leaving town to go through the Indian Territory, and feeling something cold I rose and found that it was the steel barrel of a gun.

That is really no way to live. When I was younger, I did not fear anything. I killed quite a large number of men on the frontier, for which I am now heartily sorry. I wish that I could replace them. But I could not very well do it, so I could only pray for them and try to do better in the future.

I have gone over the Dalton story because the whole battle was so graphically described to me by Colonel Elliott, and it is so fresh in my memory, that I felt sure the reader would like to know fully the particulars of the most successful fight ever made by civilians against a desperate band of robbers and murderers. I also thought it would be a lesson to the young who may have notions of robbing banks as a means of obtaining a livelihood.

Be sure, boys, that no desperate man ever lived to enjoy what he has won by deeds of blood. The average desperado lasts about three years in this climate, according to statistics, and even during that time he sleeps very poorly of nights.

Think of Emmett Dalton! In 12 minutes after he entered the town of Coffeyville he lay, torn and shattered with buckshot, in the alley, where near him lay his dead brothers, with their warm blood drenching the false beards and the money they had tried to win. Eight dead and three wounded lay within a few yards. I said to Colonel Elliott, and I say here now, that Emmett Dalton ought to be ashamed of himself.

Mr. Drywinter sat by the stove, with his face bandaged, groaning horribly, and his wife endeavored to console him. "Have patience, Charles. Murthering and fretting will do no good. Remember Job—he had patience."

"Yes, but he never had his teeth extracted by the painless process."—Chicago Tribune.

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